

Classroom and Campus Procedures

by Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D.

Classrooms are systems. If you want to have good discipline, then you must think of your classroom as a system, and you must manage it as a system.

Think of your classroom as a highway system with stoplights, intersecting roads, rules about turning, staying in the proper lane, etc. If we didn't have a system for highways and roads, driving would be impossible—or at least impossibly dangerous. Even when you know the system for driving and highways, you still have to watch each driver. But without a system, it would be total chaos. So your classroom must have a system.

Ninety-five percent of discipline problems occur in the first and last five minutes of class or during a transition.

These tend to occur because there are not clear procedures.

In middle school the basic issue is that students are making the transition from being cared for to taking care of themselves. Part of taking care of yourself is being organized. So a huge chunk of time is spent in middle school teaching students how to be organized. Consistency is a big issue in organization, and so it's important, particularly in middle school, that there be a team approach to the grade level—and that a consistent approach be used for organization, behavior, and expectations.

A second issue in middle school is the maturity of the students. Hormones are "raging," and identity is shifting. So your friend on Monday will not necessarily be your friend on Tuesday—but could very possibly be your friend on Wednesday. Sexual information is at a premium, and what it means to be an adolescent is constantly changing. If the campus and classroom can be generally predictable and consistent, it makes a huge difference for students.

Once you know the system for your classroom, you have to figure out how it works within the larger system of your campus. To continue the highway analogy, what happens if people repeatedly speed when they drive? They are taken out of the highway system and addressed by the much larger law enforcement/legal/judicial system. Sometimes students need to be taken out of the classroom system and addressed by the administration. So what are the components of the larger system?

1. The principal and/or assistant principal
2. The support staff (counselors, social workers, nurses, et al.)
3. Backup system of consequences and rewards (detention, school-sponsored parties, etc.)
4. District support system (alternative schools, student advocates, etc.)
5. Policies about suspension, expulsion, etc.

What follows is a list of procedures that every teacher should have in place at the start of the school year. To do so is to eliminate many of the potential problems.

Procedures Checklist #1

The following checklist is adapted from "Guidelines for the First Days of School," from the Research Development Center for Teacher Education, Research on Classrooms, University of Texas, Austin.

STARTING CLASS	MY PROCEDURE
Taking attendance	
Marking absences	
Tardy students	
Giving makeup work for absentees	
Enrolling new students	
Un-enrolling students	
Students who have to leave school early	
Warm-up activity (that students begin as soon as they walk into classroom)	

INSTRUCTIONAL TIME	MY PROCEDURE
Student movement within classroom	
Use of cell phones and headphones	
Student movement in and out of classroom	
Going to restroom	
Getting students' attention	
Students talking during class	
What students do when their work is completed	
Working together as group(s)	
Handing in papers/homework	
Appropriate headings for papers	
Bringing/distributing/using textbooks	
Leaving room for special class	
Students who don't have paper and/or pencils	
Signal(s) for getting student attention	
Touching other students in classroom	
Eating food in classroom	
Laboratory procedures (materials and supplies, safety routines, cleaning up)	
Students who get sick during class	
Using pencil sharpener	

INSTRUCTIONAL TIME	MY PROCEDURE
Listing assignments/homework/due dates	
Systematically monitoring student learning during instruction	

ENDING CLASS	MY PROCEDURE
Putting things away	
Dismissing class	
Collecting papers and assignments	

OTHER	MY PROCEDURE
Lining up for lunch/recess/special events	
Walking to lunch/recess	
Putting away coats and backpacks	
Cleaning out locker	
Preparing for fire drills and/or bomb threats	
Going to gym for assemblies/pep rallies	
Respecting teacher's desk and storage areas	
Appropriately handling/using computers/equipment	

STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY	MY PROCEDURE
Late work	
Missing work	
Extra credit	
Redoing work and/or retaking tests	
Incomplete work	
Neatness	
Papers with no names	
Using pens, pencils, colored markers	
Using computer-generated products	

STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY	MY PROCEDURE
Internet access on computers	
Setting and assigning due dates	
Writing on back of paper	
Makeup work and amount of time for makeup work	
Letting students know assignments missed during absence	
Percentage of grade for major tests, homework, etc.	
Explaining your grading policy	
Letting new students know your procedures	
Having contact with all students at least once during week	
Exchanging papers	
Using Internet for posting assignments and sending them in	

HOW WILL YOU ...	MY PLAN
Determine grades on report cards (components and weights of those components)?	
Grade daily assignments?	

HOW WILL YOU ...	MY PLAN
Record grades so that assignments and dates are included?	
Have students keep records of their own grades?	
Make sure your assignments and grading reflect progress against standards?	
Notify parents when students are not passing or having other academic problems?	
Contact parents if problem arises regarding student behavior?	
Contact parents with positive feedback about their child?	
Keep records and documentation of student behavior?	
Document adherence to IEP (individualized education plan)?	
Return graded papers in timely manner?	
Monitor students who have serious health issues (peanut allergies, diabetes, epilepsy, etc.)?	

Procedures Checklist #2: Grades 6–8

Karen Miller, Grapevine, Texas, shared procedures from her middle school experience.

STARTING CLASS	MY PROCEDURE
Taking attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Students are assigned seats. Seats are numbered, and students are assigned numbers. ■ The teacher has a seating chart for each period. The seating chart consists of small Post-its with the student's name and a small photograph if necessary, and these are attached to a plan of the desks in the classroom. (Photographs are obtained from the yearbook and the attendance list from the computer.) ■ The teacher can take attendance using the chart while the students are working on their warm-ups. Data are entered into the computer. ■ For the first week of school students call out their names as teacher checks the chart to help with pronunciation and association. ■ Post-it notes are moved around when new seats are assigned.

STARTING CLASS	MY PROCEDURE
Marking absences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attendance is marked on a class list for teacher reference, after which the data are transferred to the computer or an attendance slip that is posted on the door to be picked up by the office aide.
Tardy students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A tardy sheet is placed on a clipboard by the door. There's a class list for each period, which is replaced each grading period. ▪ If students enter the class late, they stop and sign the tardy board: date, name, and reason. If there's a note, they attach it to the board as well. ▪ When the teacher has time, he/she checks the tardy list and has a private discussion with the student. ▪ The consequences of the school tardy policy are followed. ▪ Each grading period the student is allowed one free tardy with a warning; a second tardy would result in a teacher detention; and a third is an office detention, with parent notification. Before this level is reached, however, an intervention is normally in place to solve the problem. ▪ Students with no tardies enter their names into a container, and a drawing for a reward is made each week.
Giving makeup work for absentees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Absentee folders are available. Each folder contains the following: "Missed Assignment" sheet, "We Missed You" note, and makeup work policy—how many days students have to get the assignment in to get a full grade, calendar to plan how to accomplish this, etc. ▪ These folders, a hanging file holder for worksheets, a school planner, and a monthly calendar are placed in an assigned area of the room. ▪ Class assignments are recorded daily in the planner by an appointed student, and any necessary worksheets are placed in the hanging folder according to date and period. ▪ As students return to school they pick up a folder and record the missing work. The completed work is returned in the folder, so the folder is reused.
Enrolling new students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each period has an assigned, trained class greeter who is responsible for assisting any new student in the classroom. ▪ A folder with classroom procedures, supplies, a plan to show where everything is in the classroom, an "All About Me" form, and a welcome card are given to a new student. ▪ During the period the teacher meets with the new student. ▪ New-student information is recorded in the computer, and the student is added to the class list and gradebook.
Un-enrolling students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Follow the school checklist promptly. Final grades are entered, textbooks are returned to the book room, library clearance is checked, and lockers are cleaned out. ▪ A care packet is given to each student who leaves the school.
Students who have to leave school early	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The office sends a notification that the student needs to leave. ▪ The student checks that he/she has everything needed to complete the assignments he/she will miss. ▪ The student signs the "Bye for Now" sheet at the door, including time and date, so the teacher can keep a record of student movement.

STARTING CLASS	MY PROCEDURE
Warm-up activity (that students begin as soon as they walk into classroom)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students pick up their class folders and necessary supplies as they enter the classroom. Students record in their planners the objectives and activities for the day from the board. ▪ This list becomes a checklist for the period. Students check off completed assignments. ▪ Student then work on the assigned warm-up, which will vary according to the lesson for the day. Examples: journal entry, a challenge, reviewing a concept. ▪ The warm-up is checked, shared, or discussed five minutes after the bell rings. A timer is set.

INSTRUCTIONAL TIME	MY PROCEDURE
Going to restroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students need a pass to be in the hallway during class periods. ▪ Teachers sign a student planner and write down the time the student leaves the room. If the student has no planner and needs to go to the restroom, the teacher could write a pass. The teacher monitors how many times a student is leaving the room by having a signout/signin sheet at the door. ▪ If it's a daily occurrence, the teacher and student have a conference and discuss other alternatives.
Signals for getting students' attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "High five" hand signal — silent in five seconds ▪ Lights on/off ▪ Chimes/instruments ▪ Claps
Students talking during class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Time to talk in a structured way is built into the lesson. Some of the methods are "Talking Chips," round robin (timed sharing around a group), "Pair Share," peer coaching, 30-second share. ▪ Voice levels are practiced, and hand movements and analogies are used to indicate noise level permitted. Example: Six-inch voices, with hand movement to match. ▪ Background music sets the loudness of the voices allowed; no voice is to be heard over the music.
What students do when their work is completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A list of "Things to Do" when students have completed their work is posted in the classroom. There's a variety of activities — many of them rewarding to encourage students to stay on task and complete their classwork. ▪ A "lounging" area to work in also is available in the classroom.
Working together as group(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If working in pairs or groups is used as a teaching tool, then students are assigned to groups by the teacher. Roles are determined, and cards are handed out to explain each student's role and accountability in the group. ▪ The social aspects of working successfully with a group are taught and reinforced. ▪ The group has clear objectives and outcomes. ▪ Informal groups or pairs are a useful tool to promote student interaction. ▪ Group work needs to be carefully monitored by the teacher. The task needs to be well-defined, and a time limit for task completion is assigned to prevent off-task behavior.

INSTRUCTIONAL TIME	MY PROCEDURE
Handing in papers/ homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each classroom has a clearly labeled basket where students place their work. ▪ A group checklist may be used to monitor any missing assignments immediately.
Appropriate headings for papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The heading format is posted in the room for reference. ▪ The heading is consistent throughout the school. ▪ Five points of the grade are allocated to the heading. ▪ With a star students mark the center spot on their paper where the heading is to go. "You Are a Star" is one way for students to remember this.
Bringing/distributing/ using textbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ After textbooks have been distributed to students during a designated class period, they bring their books to the classroom. The books' numbers are recorded on a class book list by the student, then checked by the teacher. ▪ The contents of the books are covered in class, and the students do a scavenger hunt to familiarize themselves with the format of the book, as well as the sections. ▪ If the teacher has a class set, the textbooks are taken home. ▪ A poster is placed next to each classroom door listing supplies/books that are needed for that class. ▪ A color is associated with different books and activities. ▪ Extra books are kept in the classroom so that students may check them out.
Leaving room for special class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students sign a "Signout Sheet" at the door: date, time, reason.
Students who don't have paper and/or pencils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A team box with supplies for each team is available. The material monitor is responsible for checking his/her team box before class starts and before class is dismissed. ▪ Sharpened, marked (colored tape, silk flowers) pencils and pens are placed near the pencil sharpener for use during class. These are to be returned after class. Paper is available in a paper tray in a designated area. Students donate paper to keep the supply going. ▪ Students are responsible to have the supplies they need before class starts, so that learning time isn't lost. ▪ An after-school homework club every afternoon is open for students who need extra help or supplies for project work.
Touching other students in classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Keep your hands, feet, and objects to yourself" shows respect for others and is enforced. ▪ Students who cannot follow the above rule are moved away from the person they are bothering. Routes in the room are defined and practiced until an improvement is noted. ▪ A private student/teacher discussion establishes other ways to show feelings or resolve conflict. Replacement behaviors are decided upon and practiced.
Eating food in classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Food is not allowed in the classroom. Water is allowed. ▪ If a teacher supplies snacks as a reward, they have to be eaten during that teacher's class period. ▪ The late-lunch grade level has an assigned snack period where the students could bring a healthy snack to class. A list of suggested snack items is discussed, distributed, and posted in all classrooms.

INSTRUCTIONAL TIME	MY PROCEDURE
Laboratory procedures (materials and supplies, safety routines, cleaning up)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The district guidelines are followed. ▪ Demonstrations take place, and the students have to pass the safety test before they can participate in the labs.
Students who get sick during class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The teacher fills in a "Nurse Pass" that provides the date, time, reason, and teacher's name. The student then reports to the nurse's office. ▪ If the student returns, the pass returns with the student informing the teacher of the result of the visit. ▪ If the student is sent home, the teacher is called and informed. ▪ If a student is too ill to get to the nurse's office, the nurse is called and the student is escorted to the office.
Using pencil sharpener	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pencils are sharpened before class starts. ▪ If a pencil breaks during class and the teacher is talking, the student exchanges his/her pencil for a sharpened pencil from the "Pencil/Pen Can." When the instruction part of the lesson is complete, the student may then sharpen his/her pencil. ▪ The teacher models why this is necessary by sharpening a pencil while giving directions. The students can't hear! The point is obvious. ▪ Rule: Only one person at the pencil sharpener at any given time.
Listing assignments/homework/due dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A large, bulletin-size calendar is used to display assignment-due days, upcoming events. ▪ This calendar also is used to model back planning of long-term assignments. ▪ Homework lists are kept on a weekly board so students can keep a checklist for themselves.
Systematically monitoring student learning during instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The teacher moves around the room during the period monitoring student work by tallying on-task behavior, spot-checking work, and giving immediate feedback. ▪ Students have self-corrective stations set up in the classroom where they go to check their work periodically during the class period: Sticker if all right, make corrections if not writing down where the mistake was found. ▪ The timer is set; when it goes off students turn to a partner and check their answers, as well as share their thoughts or observations.

Charts adapted from *Working with Students: Discipline Strategies for the Classroom*, Ruby K. Payne (2006)



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